



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund

Rhinos and tigers are among the most charismatic species on earth. They are also among the world's most endangered species. Despite protection afforded under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the U.S. Endangered Species Act, rhinos and tigers continue to decline throughout much of their range.

Concern over the decline prompted increased support for their protection in recent years and stricter controls on the sale and trade of rhino and tiger products.

In an effort to strengthen on-the-ground conservation for these species, the U.S. Congress passed the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1994 (amended in 1998). The Act established the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund (Fund), a competitive grants program

designed to provide resources to support conservation activities.

Congress created the Fund to strengthen habitat and ecosystem management, develop protected areas, support surveys and monitoring, and increase resources for anti-poaching efforts, wildlife inspection and forensic work. The Fund also supports education efforts to increase public awareness of the plight of these creatures, decrease conflicts between them and humans, and encourage use of substitutes for their body parts and products in traditional medicine.

The Fund seeks to strengthen the conservation activities of range countries since the ultimate survival of the rhinoceros and tiger rests with the managers, scientists, and local communities of these countries. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) works to achieve the objectives of the Fund by



*Black rhino*  
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developing partnerships with natural resource agencies, academic institutions, local community groups, government and non-government entities, and any other organization committed to partnering for the benefit of the world's remaining wild tigers and rhinos in Asia and Africa. Such collaboration has served to strengthen projects and leverage matching funds. During 1999 to 2000, the Service received 129 proposals and awarded 51 grants totaling \$1,160,600 in 13 countries, leveraging more than \$2,219,000 in matching and in-kind support.

The following projects provide a sample of contributions supported by the Fund for the continued survival of these species.

#### ***Sumatran Rhino***

The Sumatran rhino is critically endangered, with a population of approximately 300. The Fund assisted with training, equipping and operating anti-poaching patrols to protect this species at Way Kambas National Park in southern Sumatra, and developing of a breeding program to utilize individuals from zoos and at risk habitats. The Fund also supported anti-poaching patrols in Peninsular Malaysia and a conservation education program for villagers living near rhino habitats in Sabah, Malaysia.

#### ***Javan Rhino***

The Javan rhino, known only to reside in Ujung Kulon National Park, Indonesia, and Cat Tien National Park, Vietnam, is the most rare of all rhino species with approximately 60 individuals currently surviving in the wild. There are no Javan rhinos in captivity. At Ujung Kulon, the Fund supported anti-poaching units and identification of critical conservation needs. At Cat Tien National Park, the Fund supported status surveys, an awareness program for children and their parents living on the fringe of the park, and an evaluation of the Vietnamese rhino conservation strategy. At both parks, the Fund supports studies on population dynamics through DNA analysis of rhino dung.

#### ***Indian Rhino***

The Indian rhino now numbers approximately 2,400. Increasing human populations and poverty within communities surrounding protected

areas, coupled with the great value of Indian rhino horn, have resulted in significant losses from poachers in India and Nepal. In the northeast Indian state of Assam, the Fund provided field equipment to forest guards protecting rhinos, supported conservation education programs for villagers, facilitated construction of anti-poaching camps, and strengthened prosecution of rhino poaching cases. The Fund also supported the translocation of rhinos between parks in Nepal to strengthen newly established populations.

#### ***Black Rhino***

The most numerous of the world's rhino species in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the black rhino's population plummeted to only 2600 in 1999. This drastic decline was a result of poaching and loss of habitat. The Fund strengthened black rhino conservation in South Africa by supporting anti-poaching training of national park rangers, marking of rhinos for horn and carcass identification, and fencing across an array of reserves. Similar initiatives are underway in a number of other black rhino range countries.

#### ***White Rhino***

The white rhino has two subspecies. The *southern white rhino*, though drastically reduced in numbers at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, now numbers 10,400 in the wild, making it the most numerous of rhino subspecies. The *northern white rhino* suffered drastic reductions from poaching for horn, hide, and bushmeat; numbers fell from 2,250 in 1960 to 700 in 1970. By 2000 only 30 individuals remained in Garamba National Park, Congo. The Fund supported aerial monitoring for security purposes and to obtain data on population dynamics.

#### ***Tiger***

The tiger has five remaining subspecies (5,000 to 7,500 animals in the wild) scattered in populations from India to Vietnam, and in Sumatra, China, and the Russian Far East. Commercial poaching, a declining prey base due to over hunting, and loss of habitat are principal threats.

In India's Simlipal National Park, the Fund supported a project to inform tribal hunters of harm being done to the *Bengal tiger* and its prey by their annual hunting rituals. In communities adjacent to

Nepal's Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve, school children and their families received conservation education on the significance of conserving tigers and the nearby protected area upon which it depends. In the Sundarbans of Bangladesh, a tiger assessment was initiated to allow development of an appropriate management plan for this subspecies.

In Indonesia, a study of the ecology and conservation needs of the *Sumatran tiger* at Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park received assistance; as did an environmental awareness project for people living on the fringe of Way Kambas National Park.

To conserve the *Indo-Chinese tiger* at Khao Yai National Park, Thailand, the Fund supported a model program for tiger monitoring, law enforcement and community outreach. In Cambodia, a survey on illegal trade of this subspecies was completed. The Fund also supported projects in three provinces of central Vietnam to increase conservation awareness among local people and develop capacity among resource management personnel to conduct tiger surveys.

An assessment of the *South China tiger* was strengthened in southern China. In northeast China, a workshop to develop a plan for restoring the *Amur tiger* was conducted with involvement of Chinese, Russian and American conservationists. In Khabarovsk, Russia, the Fund has supported annual monitoring of tigers as well as anti-poaching efforts.

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